

Ephedra

Scientific Name: Ephedrine Sulfate

Common Names: Ephedra, Ephedra Sinica, Ma-huang

Historical Perspective: Ephedra Sinica is an herb which has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for over 5,000 years and is considered the world's oldest medicine. Healers have used this herb to treat asthma, coughs, colds and induce sweating. Most naturally growing ephedra is found in temperate climates, in China, Mongolia, Southern Siberia and Japan, usually on sandy seashores.

Common Uses: Aid in weight loss, increase energy, sexual enhancement and produce euphoria. Ephedrine is used medicinally for the relief of asthma, allergies, colds, and hay fever (available in over-the-counter cold remedies).

Forms Used: The primary form of Ephedra is in tablet or capsule form. Ephedra is not commonly available in its pure form, but in combination with several other ingredients -- other ingredients include caffeine in the following forms: guarana, guara concentrate extract, kola and kola nut. Stevia and garcinia cambogia can also be found in ephedra containing supplements.

Common and/or Recommended Dosage: The dosage of ephedra is dependent on the brand name purchased. Most manufacturer's recommend consuming multiple tablets or capsules per day, providing a range between 150 – 4000 mg of ephedra per day.

Potential Side Effects: Ephedra may cause addiction, headache, insomnia, nervousness, agitation, dizziness, vomiting, difficult urination, manic episodes, kidney stones, hepatitis, high blood pressure, heart palpitations, tachycardia, heart attack, stroke and death. Side effects of ephedra use, are often intensified by the other ingredients commonly available as an additive to the product, such as caffeine.

Food Drug Interactions: MAO inhibitors, digoxin, caffeine, over-the-counter cold remedies, stimulants.

Contraindication to Use: Pregnancy, Graves' disease, high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity.

Research Data on Safety and Efficacy: Case studies on hundreds of individuals indicate that ephedra and ephedra containing products are not safe for use. The Food and Drug Administration lists ephedra as a potentially dangerous supplement on its warnings and safety information page, and has proposed safety measures for manufactures of ephedra containing products. Many sport associations, including the International Olympic Committee, have banned ephedra use.

Bottom Line: Ephedra is not recommended for use due to it's serious, life-threatening side effects.

References:

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